

Language Access Improved During Pandemic

“The launch of the Hub was an exciting time because it not only improved access to translated materials for groups working with LEP populations, but also clearly demonstrated CDPH’s commitment to health equity early in the COVID-19 pandemic and informed future response activities.”

Katey Rosenquist, Emerging Issues and Policy Specialist, MPH
California Department of Public Health, Office of Strategic Development and External Relations (Fusi

Public Health Problem (Issue)

Having access to current public health information during a pandemic is vital. People need to know how to protect themselves and their families. They need to know what resources are available and where to find them.

Language barriers to understanding health information can lead to serious health risks for individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) [1]. Insufficient translated materials causes inequities, making it harder for LEP individuals to understand public health guidance and access support. With an estimated 18.1% of Californians with LEP [2], it is crucial to provide pandemic information and resources in as many languages as possible.

The State of California has been actively translating many websites, guidance documents, and health education materials related to COVID-19. For example, the covid19.ca.gov [3] website, provides information in seven languages. On the CDPH COVID-19 website, guidance documents are translated into 13 languages [4]. However, before July 2020, there was no environment that gathered translated CA state COVID-19 materials for easy access.

Taking Action (Intervention)

To address this need for a central hub of translated COVID-19 information, several CDPH programs came together. The Fusion Center block grant funded staff led this effort with a team of representatives from Center for Family Health, Office of Health Equity, Center for Healthy Communities, and Office of Refugee Health. In July 2020, this team published the CDPH COVID-19 Health Equity and Multilingual Resources [5] webpage (also known as “the Hub”). The Hub collects COVID-19 resources from CDPH, other state sites, and additional multilingual or health equity materials vetted by state subject matter experts. Principal users include stakeholder organizations, local health departments, and community-based organizations (CBOs) that work with LEP communities. The Hub content is organized into four subpages titled “Health Information,” “Working and Living Safely,” “Get Help,” and “How You Can Help.” Securing buy-in from stakeholders across the department and using an iterative process led to a successful webpage. Before widely publicizing the page, the team solicited input from CDPH, other CA Health and Human Services Agency departments, and external stakeholders. This webpage continues to be a living environment, with regularly updated content and continuous improvement.

The word is getting out about the Hub through various avenues. For example, the CDPH COVID-19 Communications Toolkit [6] and the CDPH COVID-19 Community Outreach Resources [7] pages both link to the Hub. In September 2020, the Office of Health Equity Newsletter introduced the Hub to about 14,000 stakeholders. Some stakeholders who received this newsletter, such as California ACES Action [8], have also introduced the Hub on their own webpages.

Impact

The Hub makes it easier for advocates, CBOs, caretakers, and others to efficiently access trusted and translated public health materials. Stakeholders can then better support the health and wellbeing of LEP individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the quickly evolving landscape of new activities and initiatives to improve health equity for COVID-19, the Hub also serves as an information-sharing platform for language access activities led by different CA state departments. State officials can collaborate with and amplify each-others' efforts around COVID-19 language access activities by sharing translated materials and learning about related outreach initiatives. These collaborative efforts help state departments to better advance the health and well-being of all Californians.

Footnotes

[1] National Institutes of Health. Language Access in Clear Communication [website]. Updated Dec 2017. Available at www.nih.gov/institutes-nih/nih-office-director/office-communications-public-liaison/clear-communication/language-access-clear-communication.

[2] United States Census Bureau. American Community Survey: Languages Spoken at Home [website]. Available at www.census.gov/acs/www/about/why-we-ask-each-question/language/.

[3] California for All. COVID19.CA.GOV: Your Actions Save Lives [website]. Updated Nov 2020. Available at <https://covid19.ca.gov/>.

[4] California Department of Public Health. COVID-19: Multilingual Documents [website]. Updated Oct 2020. Available at www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/COVID19MultilingualDocuments.aspx

[5] California Department of Public Health. COVID-19: Health Equity and Multilingual Resources [website]. Updated Oct 2020. Available at www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/OHE/Pages/COVID-19-Health-Equity-and-Multilingual-Resource-Hub.aspx.

[6] California Department of Public Health. COVID-19: Communications Toolkit [website]. Updated Nov 2020. Available at www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/OPA/Pages/Communications-Toolkits/Communications-Toolkit.aspx.

[7] California Department of Public Health. COVID-19: Community Outreach Resources [website]. Updated Oct 2020. Available at www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Resources.aspx.

[8] California ACEs Action. New CDPH COVID-19 Health Equity and Multilingual Resources [website]. Updated Sept 2020. Available at www.acesconnection.com/g/california-aces-action/blog/new-cdph-covid-19-health-equity-and-multilingual-resources-web-page.

Success Story Author Contact:

First and Last Name: Jessica Lin

Title: Public Health Strategist

Department or Affiliation: California Department of Public Health, Office of Strategic Development and External Relations (Fusion Center)

Email: Jessica.Lin@cdph.ca.gov

Phone: include area code (916)322-5389

Healthy People Objective

Health Improvement Plans

PHHS Block Grant Funding

100% - Total source of funding



COVID-19

HEALTH EQUITY AND MULTILINGUAL RESOURCES



COVID-19 affects all Californians, but different communities are affected in different ways. Marginalized communities and populations at increased risk of getting COVID or becoming severely ill will suffer disproportionately during this pandemic. To promote health equity and the accessibility of multilingual materials for California's diverse population, this site serves as a collection of resources for health providers, community-based organizations, advocacy groups and others to use in their work directly serving communities in a culturally responsive manner. The Office of Health Equity (OHE) is on the forefront of COVID-19 response efforts to be a voice for underserved and underrepresented populations. We invite you to learn more about OHE's efforts addressing COVID-19 (PDF).

Please visit our main_CDPH_COVID-19 page.



COVID-19

HEALTH EQUITY AND MULTILINGUAL RESOURCES

Health Information



- Health Information
- Get Help
- Working & Living Safely
- How You Can Help

GENERAL

- Get the Facts about Coronavirus (CDC)
(English, Spanish, Traditional Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, American Sign Language)
- COVID-19 Communication resources (CDC)